

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3 and 4 have been amended. Claim 2 has been canceled, and Claim 6 added. The claims have been redrafted to recite active method steps so as to comport more closely to U.S. practice. Support for the amendment to claim 1 may be found in original claims 2, 3 and 5, as well as in the specification as filed in the paragraph bridging pages 15 and 16 of the specification and the first full paragraph on page 16. Support for Claim 3 can be found in the first full paragraph on page 16, while support for new Claim 6 can be found in the paragraph bridging pages 15 and 16. Thus, no new matter has been added. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the present rejection in view of the amendments and comments presented herein are respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hiraoka et al. (JP 2001-151834A). The Examiner alleges that in paragraph [0346], Hiraoka et al. teaches a production process of a foam sheet according to claim 1, further comprising a heating and foaming step. Although Hiraoka discloses a process for forming a porous film using a diblock copolymer having a polyisoprene chain and a polymethyl methacrylate chain, this reference neither discloses nor suggests a process for forming a foam sheet using a foamable composition containing both an acid generator that generates an acid due to action of an active energy beam and a compound that has a decomposing foamable functional group that decomposes and eliminates at least one type of low boiling point volatile substance by reacting with the acid as recited in the presently pending claims. Since the diblock copolymer used by Hiraoka et al. does not contain groups that are decomposable and foamable when reacted with the acid or base, the diblock copolymer is not foamable. In addition, in the process of Hiraoka, the polymethylmethacrylate chain (main chain) is cleaved by irradiation of an electron beam without the need for acid generators.

Although Example 21 of Hiraoka et al. describes a process for producing a structure having micro polymer phases in the film using a diblock copolymer of polystyrene and poly-tert-butyl acrylate (PtBA), the film formed by this process is extremely thin (100 nm), and is not within the thickness range recited in the present claims. Since this thin film of Hiraoka et al. is

subjected to annealing at a high temperature for a long period of time in the process, gas generated by decomposition is completely volatilized, and the resulting film is nonporous.

Thus, Hiraoka et al. neither disclose nor suggest forming a foamable composition into the shape of a sheet having a thickness of 1 μ m to 10 mm, and that such a composition should be foamed. Moreover, the foamed sheet resulting from the claimed process could not be obtained using the method disclosed by Hiraoka et al.

In view of the amendments and comments presented above, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance. However, should there be any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number appearing below.

Respectfully submitted,

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